



# UNITED STATES CAPITOL POLICE

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Testimony of

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before the

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and  
Emergency Management

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Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today to discuss the planning and preparations the United States Capitol Police has conducted in anticipation of the opening of the Capitol Visitors Center next year.

In 1998, after Officer Jacob Chestnut and Detective John Gibson were fatally shot in the United States Capitol by an armed intruder, planning of the Capitol Visitors Center began in earnest. In fact Madam Chair, you were one of the first proponents to reinvigorate the concept of a visitors center when you introduced H.R. 962 in 1999.

Since that time, the U.S. Capitol Police has worked in partnership with the Architect of the Capitol to help design the CVC in such a manner as to not only enhance and enrich the visitor's experience, but also enhance the security of the United States Capitol. As the construction of the facility progresses, it is clear that both goals will be achieved.

The main advantage that the CVC presents from a security perspective is the ability for the U.S. Capitol Police to conduct security screening of visitors in a state-of-the-art facility that was designed for that purpose. As we saw in 1998, the historic and ceremonial entrances of the Capitol were never intended to support the security screening that is necessary in today's threat environment. The opening of the CVC, with its entryways custom-designed to support security equipment, police officer positioning, and technology to detect and contain threats, all in a seamless welcoming environment, will serve to enhance the visitor experience while mitigating current and emerging threats.

It should be noted that the U.S. Capitol Police is, in effect, staffing what equates to a new federal building that has a high-level security requirement to protect both the structure and the building occupants. This requirement was magnified in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. We have conducted numerous studies to determine the requisite police staffing that will provide optimum law enforcement and security services. We have also been working closely with the committees of jurisdiction on this issue. Based on the planned hours of operation of the CVC and other operating assumptions of the facility, we submitted a detailed staffing and budget plan for consideration and approval. We are currently moving forward to fill those police positions. In addition, we are developing a training module for all USCP personnel that will familiarize them with the facility, the life-safety systems, and emergency response plans. We are also in the process of integrating the emergency plans of the CVC with those already in place for the Capitol since the buildings are inter-connected.

While the CVC is designed to welcome visitors to the Capitol, its opening presents a significant logistical challenge of getting visitors to the main entrance. Prior to CVC construction, and prior to 9/11, commercial tour buses used to off-load and load visitors on the East side of the Capitol. In peak tourist season, scores of buses would crowd the streets throughout the Capitol Complex causing congestion and impeding traffic flow.

Following the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. Capitol Police took measures to prevent large trucks from coming into close proximity to the Capitol and the House and Senate Office Buildings. This was done to prevent the introduction of a large vehicle borne improvised explosive device into an area that, if detonated, would result in significant loss of life, structural damage and disruption of the national legislative process. This week, in a measure aimed at enhancing security, plans were announced to also exclude commercial buses from select streets within the Capitol Complex. While we have a concern with large motor coach type buses due to their load capacity, this policy will not affect public transit buses or sightseeing trolleys from continuing to traverse the major thoroughfares within the Capitol Complex.

It should be noted that this decision was not made in isolation. As we were developing our security plans, we conferred with the Capitol Preservation Commission (CPC) and other stakeholders so that they could begin exploring alternate methods of moving visitors from satellite locations to the CVC. The CPC is actively considering a number of options that will leverage infrastructure already available near the Capitol as well as public transit vehicles. One such facility is Union Station which is an intermodal transportation hub that can support motor coach parking. Talks are also underway with city officials to explore integrating the Circulator Bus system into the movement of people to and from the CVC. Once the CPC decides upon a workable plan that meets the security criteria and visitor transport needs, recommendations will be made to the committees of jurisdiction. We look forward to continuing to work with the CPC, various House and Senate committees, and city officials as these plans are discussed and implemented.

In the interim, and even after the CVC opens, tour buses will be allowed to offload and load passengers on First Street located on the west side of the Capitol just as they have done for the past five years while the CVC has been under construction.

Madam Chair, we understand that bus traffic in the city does not just affect the Capitol Complex. The United States Capitol Police has always been a good neighbor to the surrounding community and it is our desire not to displace problems into local neighborhoods. Therefore, in order to offer a security and law enforcement point of view on the matter, we stand ready to work with the city officials and other concerned entities to develop a comprehensive bus management plan for the city that supports tourism and visitor experience while respecting the quality of life and environmental concerns of city residents.

We have made great strides in improving security within the Capitol Complex while balancing the needs of the city, visitors, and the Congress. The opening of the Capitol Visitors Center will mark the achievement of a long desired goal of creating a facility that welcomes visitors from across the nation and around the world in a modern, safe, and secure environment that compliments the grandeur of the United States Capitol.

I look forward to adding this new element to the mission of the United States Capitol Police. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.